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Viewing cable 06BOGOTA4750, ESTIMATES ON REGROUPING OF DEMOBILIZED

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Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
06BOGOTA4750	2006-05-30 19:02	2011-08-30 01:44	SECRET	Embassy Bogota

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S E C R E T BOGOTA 004750

SIPDIS

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/30/2025
TAGS: [KJUS](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [CO](#)
SUBJECT: ESTIMATES ON REGROUPING OF DEMOBILIZED
PARAMILITARIES, GOC STRATEGY

REF: BOGOTA 4645

Classified By: Ambassador William B. Wood.
Reasons: 1.4 (b) and (d)

SUMMARY

¶1. (S) Estimates of the collectively demobilized paramilitaries (30,902 to date) that have regrouped into criminal organizations range from 2 to 4 percent. According to Colombian National Police Intelligence (DIPOL) analysts and the Military's Joint Intelligence Center, 21 new criminal groups have formed. Sergio Caramagna, Director of the Mission to Support the Peace Process in Colombia (MAPP/OAS), warned that the numbers could increase significantly if national and local governments fail to offer adequate security, reinsertion programs, and basic services. In an effort to improve security, 5,000 police officers are being trained to be sent to 53 of the 120 administrative regions the GOC and the MAPP/OAS have identified as critical. Caramagna would like the Mission to increase its verification efforts and assist high-risk communities with tailored reinsertion programs, and requested USG support for these efforts. Caramagna and DIPOL analysts agreed that the Constitutional Court's May 18 decision to uphold most of the provisions of the controversial Justice and Peace Law were positive in the short-term, but not necessarily good for future peace processes with the remaining illegal actors. End summary.

RELATIVELY FEW DEMOBILIZED PARAMILITARIES
REGROUP AS CRIMINAL GANGS

¶2. (C) Caramagna told poloff on May 19 that press reports estimating over 4,000 demobilized paramilitaries returning to criminal activity were inflated. In his view, less than 2 percent of the 30,140 collectively demobilized combatants have returned to crime. Caramagna warned, however, this number could increase if the national and local governments fail to offer adequate security, reinsertion programs, and basic services, such as education and health to these individuals. (The majority of demobilized combatants are men under 30 years of age with limited education.)

¶3. (S) DIPOL analysts believe 4 percent have regrouped. According to DIPOL analysts and the Military's Joint Intelligence Center, 21 new criminal groups have formed. Of these, DIPOL identified 10 structures through intelligence means, such as signal intercepts, and the remaining 11 through other evidence. On average, each group is composed of 50 members and not all the members are demobilized paramilitaries. Each group has a mix of former combatants, paramilitaries who never demobilized, narcotraffickers, and other criminals.

¶4. (C) DIPOL analysts said these new groups cannot be categorized as re-emerging paramilitary groups, but rather are criminal organizations primarily interested in narcotrafficking and other illegal activities. DIPOL analysts disagreed with some aspects of the MAPP/OAS Sixth Quarterly Report, such as the sources and methods the OAS used to gather its information. They did not say that the information was inaccurate, but rather that it was mainly obtained through individual testimonies rather than "hard evidence."

¶5. (C) In DIPOL's field experience, information obtained primarily by individual testimonies can be tainted because it

is associated with "paramilitary phantoms and legends" in the regions. This does not mean that remnants of paramilitary structures do not exist or that new groups use their "paramilitary masks" to create fear, among the people, but all intelligence indicates the main paramilitary groups and

leaders are tired of living in hiding and many have seen the peace process as an opportunity to legalize their situation. The individuals that DIPOL analysts have found leading these new groups are mainly "third-tier" or "third-generation" paramilitaries, with the exception of two groups that are led by former mid-level paramilitary leaders. The "third-tier" were never interested in the peace process and were fully engaged in narcotrafficking, according to DIPOL.

GOC'S STRATEGY AGAINST THE EMERGING GROUPS, REINSERTION

¶16. (C) According to DIPOL analysts, the GOC created in March an interagency group called "Intelligence for Peace," composed of representatives of the Ministry of Defense, the Peace Commissioner's Office, Administrative Security Department (DAS, FBI equivalent), Army, Navy, and Police intelligence, to coordinate GOC efforts on the reemergence of new groups and encourage further desertions from illegal armed groups. Since its initiation, three operations have taken place against newly identified groups. The most recent operation was held in Narino Department and police detained three key individuals.

¶17. (C) With the help of MAPP/OAS, the Intelligence for Peace Group has identified 120 administrative regions or "corregimientos" of high risk that need immediate attention. DIPOL analysts explained that these "corregimientos" are located in zones "intersected by the conflict" or areas where the different illegal armed groups are present and where key routes or economic interests are found. Not surprisingly, these "corregimientos" are located primarily in the Departments where the majority of demobilized paramilitaries are located. According to a study done by the Organization for International Migration Mission in Colombia, 70 percent of these former combatants live in five Departments: Antioquia (32 percent), Cordoba (14 percent), Cesar (10.5 percent), Magdalena (8.6 percent), and Santander (4.8 percent). Other Departments that require attention are Choco, Narino, North Santander, Sucre, Valle and North Valle.

¶18. (C) Caramagna noted that the National Police has been more engaged compared to the military in trying to promote security. For example, 5,000 police officers are being trained to be sent to 53 of the 120 "corregimientos" identified (DIPOL analysts noted that in 24 of the 53 "corregimientos" police presence has recently been increased). Moreover, the police plan to offer jobs and training to 3,700 demobilized paramilitaries as unarmed traffic auxiliaries. In contrast, Caramagna saw the military divided between those who support the efforts to provide security and those less willing, as they see the demobilization of the paramilitaries as favoring the FARC. There is a consensus between MAPP/OAS and the Intelligence for Peace Group that in addition to creating new police posts, there needs to be an integral effort from various government entities to increase their presence and assistance to these communities. Tierradentro, Cordoba Department will be used as a model for this new interagency effort.

¶19. (C) Though the Medellin Reinsertion Program is always cited as an example, Caramagna argued that it is not great, but it is "the least the government should do" around the country. He thought that the government should develop a clear strategy to conduct a "territorial follow up" on demobilized paramilitaries. Moreover, to increase the relevance and importance on reinsertion, the GOC should name a High Commissioner for Reinsertion. Caramagna said the government is considering naming a High Commissioner or creating a Ministry to deal with this effort. The name of

Gustavo Villegas, formerly in charge of the reinsertion program in Medellin, is floating around (although Villegas told the DCM he plans to accept another job within the administration of Sergio Fajardo, Medellin Mayor, and is not prepared to work as the High Commissioner for Reinsertion.)

EVALUATING MAPP/OAS MISSION CAPACITY

¶10. (C) Caramagna highlighted the increased support to the Mission from member states and observer countries, which has permitted the hiring of personnel in recent months. Twenty-two officers have been designated by members states as their contribution, all of whom are international experts with experience in reinsertion and conflict resolution. Even though the OAS said in its Sixth Quarterly Report that the Mission would achieve its goal of having 10 regional offices and more than 100 officers by mid-year, Caramagna has decided to increase OAS personnel in the already established offices instead, until he is able to hire more people (MAPP/OAS currently has a total of 80 people, 56 in the field and a total of six regional offices.) With Spain's recent offer of USD 1 million and the USG contribution of USD 1.5 million just recently approved, this could enable the OAS to open other offices later in the year.

¶11. (C) In addition to its verification role in the peace process, Caramagna requested USG support for the Mission to further assist high risk communities with reinsertion programs. He argued that the Mission's access to these communities and the confidence that the people have in its representatives, puts it in a unique position to help.

READ-OUT ON IMPACT OF CONSTITUTIONAL COURT'S DECISION

¶12. (C) Caramagna and DIPOL analysts agreed that the Constitutional Court's May 18 decision to uphold most of the provisions of the Justice and Peace Law (septel) was positive in the short-term, but not necessarily good for future peace processes with the remaining illegal actors. Problems could arise with the remaining three paramilitary groups that are scheduled to demobilize after the presidential election on May 28--Elmer Cardenas Bloc, Cacique Pipinta, and Martin Llanos Bloc--and future peace processes with the ELN and the FARC.

¶13. (C) Now that the Constitutional Court has upheld the Justice and Peace Law, DIPOL analysts plan to continue to assist the Prosecutor's Office Justice and Peace Unit. Since the creation of the Intelligence for Peace Group, in the last three months, DIPOL analysts knowledgeable about the various demobilized paramilitary groups and leaders have been training prosecutors and investigators on the history and activities of each group.

FOLLOW UP ON CURUMANI, CESAR MASSACRE

¶14. (C) Caramagna noted that the Mission continues to follow closely a massacre that occurred in Curumani, Cesar Department, perpetrated by the AUC's North Bloc in December ¶2005. (This massacre was referenced in the OAS Mission's Sixth Quarterly Report.) One minor who remained missing (16-year-old Jesus Emiro Manzano) was found recently and he and his family are in the GOC's protection program. Mission staff talked to him; he vividly recalled the paramilitary incursion and the killing of his father and cousin, among others. Manzano reported that the AUC first tortured and then shot people. He explained that several town members were accused by the paramilitaries of being ELN sympathizers, which he said was untrue and was used as an excuse. The true motivation, according to Manzano, was competition between an AUC informant and Manzano's cousin for the affection of one of the town's girls. He explained, however, that the ELN has

always had some type of presence in the area, but in the recent years has been weakening. Caramagna said that the Mission has found these collusions/massacres to be generally motivated by personal vengeance or disputes over economic interests.

COMMENT

¶15. (C) Because of the illegal nature of the activity, the actual number of demobilized, who are now entering "new" illegal gangs or remobilizing in their old blocs, is difficult to ascertain. The OAS Mission is one of the few neutral observers in a position to assess the dimensions of the problem, but their estimates may also be optimistic. Given the general coincidence of the OAS and DIPOL, however, it is probably fair to say the problem so far is less than feared. But it is early in a complex and novel process for anyone to say with authority how much "remobilization" will take place. End comment.

WOOD